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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Wednesday, May 1, 1935

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "GROUND MEAT DISHES." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A.

--ooOoo--

I'm about to make a confession today. I'm going to confess that once upon a time I belonged to that narrow-minded, unimaginative class of people who think that ground meat is good for just one thing--plain common everyday hamburg steak. Yes, I was one of those who never fastened my food grinder to the kitchen shelf except when the family cried for hamburgers. Fortunately, I had my eyes opened by one who knows better. One day I had a talk with Lucy Alexander who is the meat cookery expert at the Bureau of Home Economics. And now when anyone inquires about cutting meat costs or cooking cheap cuts, I always wish I could buy her a ticket to Washington, D. C., so she could go over and have a chat with Miss Alexander.

As a matter of fact, the conversation I had with Miss Alexander centered entirely around the meat grinder, or the meat chopper, if you prefer to call it by that name. I learned about the possibilities in meat tidbits and trimmings that don't seem good for much until they go through this mill. Yes, and I learned about the different meats that were adapted to chopping and then what to do with them when chopped.

Miss Alexander and I spent quite a while talking about meat-patties or cakes, because this is such an often-used way of serving chopped meat. As I said, many people never use anything but beef for the purpose, so it may be news to them that lamb patties can be delicious, and so can pork or veal patties. Sometimes a combination patty is extra good--veal combined with pork, say. When you want variety from hamburgers, or when your market has specials of inexpensive lamb, or veal, or pork, then you'll be wise to choose these other meats to put through your meat grinder.

You need fairly lean meat for patties. "A happy medium," advises Miss Alexander--"not too fat and not too lean." That's why veal and pork combine so well in patties--a mild, very lean meat plus one with more fat and flavor.

For beef patties, you can use any of the tough cuts. You see, once tough meat is ground up, you can cook it as you do tender meat. So for chopping beef, use well-flavored pieces of chuck or shoulder or flank or round or rump.

With other meats you haven't the tough-and-tender problem. More often than not all cuts of lamb, pork, and veal are tender. But chopping has its advantages here just the same. It's a way to make the most of little pieces--make them attractive, uniform, and easy to shape. When you're buying lamb to chop, you can buy a shoulder cut (saving the bones for broth) or pieces from the neck or flank. If you're going to have veal patties, flank or shank will do. Your butcher will tell you that when he wants pork for chopping, he uses the nice little ends left after shaping up the hams and shoulders.

Now, about seasoning patties. Most people like chopped parsley and a bit of onion in the mixture. Some like a dash of sage or thyme along with salt and pepper. If you want your patties dressed up to look special, fasten a narrow strip of bacon around the edge with a toothpick. Bacon is especially good with a veal patty. And then you can serve this dressy patty on a ring of Bermuda onion if you like.

If you happen to have very lean meat--say, round steak or beef chuck, or veal, you'll want to add a little fat for flavor. Miss Alexander says that both suet and bacon fat are especially good fats for meat patties. She also says you can grind suet in the mixture. For a most delicious mixture add cream, sweet or freshly soured, to the chopped meat--two or three table-spoons of cream to each pound of meat. If you haven't cream add undiluted evaporated milk.

Most people like patties better made with some starchy food or binder in the mixture. A binder helps hold the mixture together and also makes the patty lighter in texture. Some cooks use fine dry breadcrumbs moistened with milk or tomato juice for this purpose. Others use mashed potatoes or boiled rice or a thick white sauce or gravy. White sauce makes a very smooth patty.

Method of cooking? Well, you can either broil or pan-broil patties. In pan-broiling, first, brown the patty in a little fat in a hot skillet. Then finish the cooking with less heat. Turn frequently. Don't cover beef or lamb patties when cooking. Any patties containing pork need thorough cooking for health's sake, and it is better to cover them for the finish.

The popular meat loaf is just a patty mixture shaped like a loaf and baked in the oven. You can make it of beef, veal, and pork combined, or of ham and beef. Have enough fat in the mixture for richness. Crisp bits of fried salt pork or suet in a meat loaf give richness and flavor. For a binder you can use thick white sauce or breadcrumbs moistened with milk or tomatoes, or you can use boiled rice or whole wheat or mashed potatoes.

As for the baking, you can do that in two ways. You can mix the loaf and pat it into a shallow greased pan. Bake in a moderately hot oven until the outside is crusty and the loaf well-done to the center. Or you can mold your loaf on a piece of tough paper laid across a rack in a pan. Then cook slowly in a moderate oven until well-done to the center. Do not cover a meat loaf. Cook it as you do a nice roast. You should have enough fat in the mixture to keep it from drying out.

Well, so much for the secrets of good patties and meat loaves.

